

# *California Tahoe Conservancy* *25 Years of Progress*





# Mission

*The California Tahoe Conservancy's mission is to preserve, protect, restore, enhance, and sustain the unique and significant natural resources and recreational opportunities of the Lake Tahoe Basin.*

## **Board Members**

Larry Sevison, Chairman  
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Todd Ferrara, Resources Agency  
Cynthia Bryant, Department of Finance  
Kathay Lovell, City of South Lake Tahoe  
Norma Santiago, El Dorado County  
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Terri Marceron, US Forest Service (ex-officio)

**Patrick Wright, Executive Director**



*Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor*

*Lester Snow, Secretary for Natural Resources*

# Looking back

*across the first 25 years of the*  
Tahoe Conservancy, I take great pride in our record of accomplishment. Starting in our first year, and moving rapidly thereafter, the Conservancy implemented one of the most ambitious programs for the acquisition of environmentally sensitive land ever undertaken in California. At the same time, heeding our broad legislative mandate, the Conservancy assembled a set of complementary programs—ranging from erosion control, restoration of sensitive lands, and wildlife habitat preservation, to public recreation and lakeshore access—which have proven versatile enough to respond to a broad array of needs arising within the Tahoe Basin's natural and human environments. Now, in a new century, the Conservancy continues to press ahead, addressing new problems such as aquatic invasive species and emerging economic challenges.

*The results of these efforts speak for themselves. The Conservancy has established itself as a leader in the Basin, and, in many cases, as a model for other regions across the nation and beyond. Much of the credit for these accomplishments must be shared with the Conservancy's many and diverse partners, both in the public sector and in the business and nonprofit communities. The lands protected and projects implemented through such partnerships testify to the power of collaboration and common vision.*

*This strong record would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of my fellow Board members and the Conservancy's dedicated staff, their vision of Lake Tahoe as a special place, and their loyalty to that vision. Together, with the continued cooperation of our many partners and supporters, and with encouragement from the general public, I look forward to a growing legacy of achievement, as we work to preserve, protect, and sustain the treasured natural and recreational resources of the Lake Tahoe Basin.*

*Larry Sevison  
Board Chair*





*“The Conservancy plays a major role in ensuring a sustainable future for Lake Tahoe.”*

## 25 YEARS OF PROGRESS

*Established in 1984, the California Tahoe Conservancy is a State agency within the California Natural Resources Agency. Its mission is to preserve, protect, restore, enhance, and sustain the unique and significant natural resources and recreational opportunities of the Lake Tahoe Basin.*

Since its inception, the Tahoe Conservancy has acquired more than 4,800 parcels of land, totaling over 6,500 acres, for the purpose of protecting the natural environment, preserving wildlife habitat, and promoting public recreation and lake access. To acquire these critical lands, the Conservancy has spent more than \$133 million to date.

The Conservancy has provided roughly 170 grants, totaling over \$107 million, to local governments and non-profit organizations for erosion control, public recreation and access, land acquisition, and other projects.

During its first 25 years, the Conservancy has facilitated hundreds of resource enhancement and public access projects throughout the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Through its activities, the Conservancy plays a major role in ensuring a sustainable future for Lake Tahoe.

### Leadership

The Conservancy’s Board of Directors is composed of California’s Secretary for Natural Resources and Director of Finance, representatives from El Dorado County, Placer County and the City of South Lake Tahoe, and two public members, appointed by the State Senate Rules Committee and the Speaker of the Assembly. The Board also includes a non-voting U.S. Forest Service representative. This unique structure provides strong State leadership and active local involvement.

### Strategy

In order to achieve its mission, the Conservancy has developed a variety of programs.

Conservancy program objectives include:

- Protecting the natural environment of the Lake Tahoe Basin, with priority on preserving the Lake’s exceptional clarity and quality.
- Increasing public access and recreational opportunities for visitors.
- Preserving and enhancing the broad diversity of wildlife habitat.
- Restoring and maintaining its lands as healthy forests, watersheds, and open space.

### Partnerships

When it comes to developing and implementing Basin-wide plans, the Tahoe Conservancy isn’t alone. The Conservancy works with Federal and State agencies and local communities to acquire and protect natural and recreational resources of State and national significance in the Lake Tahoe Basin. With assistance from its partners the Conservancy is able to successfully set priorities, guide expenditures, and coordinate projects.

Launched in 1997, following the Lake Tahoe Summit hosted by President Clinton and Vice President Gore, the Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) is the Basin’s most important partnership. The EIP is a dynamic and comprehensive interagency effort to restore and protect the collective resources of the Tahoe Basin. The 2010 EIP Update calls for an additional \$2.5 billion in Federal, State, local, and private funding to move forward in meeting environmental goals for the Tahoe Basin.



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## LAND ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT

**Key Objectives:** Acquiring environmentally sensitive lands; restoring and maintaining acquired lands; facilitating appropriate development through acquisition and transfer of land coverage.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- Over 4,800 parcels acquired, totaling more than 6,500 acres
- 2,800,000 square feet of land coverage acquired
- Over \$10 million generated by the sale of 1.5 million square feet of coverage from 6,100 residential, commercial, and public projects
- Over 450 restoration projects completed



## FOREST HEALTH

**Key Objectives:** Protecting, preserving, and enhancing the ecological health of forest habitats; reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire; promoting the use of biomass to reduce air quality and public health impacts from burning forest materials.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- Over 1,800 acres of forest habitat enhanced

## WATERSHEDS AND WATER QUALITY

**Key Objectives:** Restoring and protecting critical watersheds and wetlands; reducing runoff of fine sediment and other pollutants that affect Lake clarity; and enhancing wildlife populations and their habitats.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- 58 acres of stream environment zone restored
- 18 acres of uplands restored
- 97 erosion control projects completed
- 311 acres of meadow habitat enhancement
- 101 acres of riparian habitat enhancement
- 19 miles of in-stream habitat enhancement
- Protection and enhancement of endangered Tahoe yellow cress habitat



## PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION

**Key Objectives:** Providing and enhancing access to Lake Tahoe and significant recreational areas within the Basin.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- 43 miles of Class I bike paths, Class II bike lanes, hiking, equestrian, and cross-country trails planned or created
- 1.75 miles of shoreline acquired and enhanced for public use
- 575 acres of lakefront property enhanced for public use



## SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Initiated in 2010, the Conservancy's newest program promotes pedestrian- and transit-friendly communities that mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change and help promote the region's transformation into a green, ecotourism-based economy.





*SIGNATURE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS*







*“The Upper Truckee River delivers more than 30 percent of the total water flow to Lake Tahoe.”*

## Upper Truckee River Watershed Restoration

THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE UPPER TRUCKEE RIVER WATERSHED tops the Conservancy’s priority list. Draining more than 54 square miles of land, this watershed is the largest, most heavily developed, and among the most degraded in the Basin. Coupled with its main tributary Trout Creek, the Upper Truckee River delivers more than 30 percent of the total water flow to Lake Tahoe and also carries the largest volume of sediment. Restoration of the lower reaches of the river and its floodplain represents the single most significant investment toward improving the clarity of Lake Tahoe.



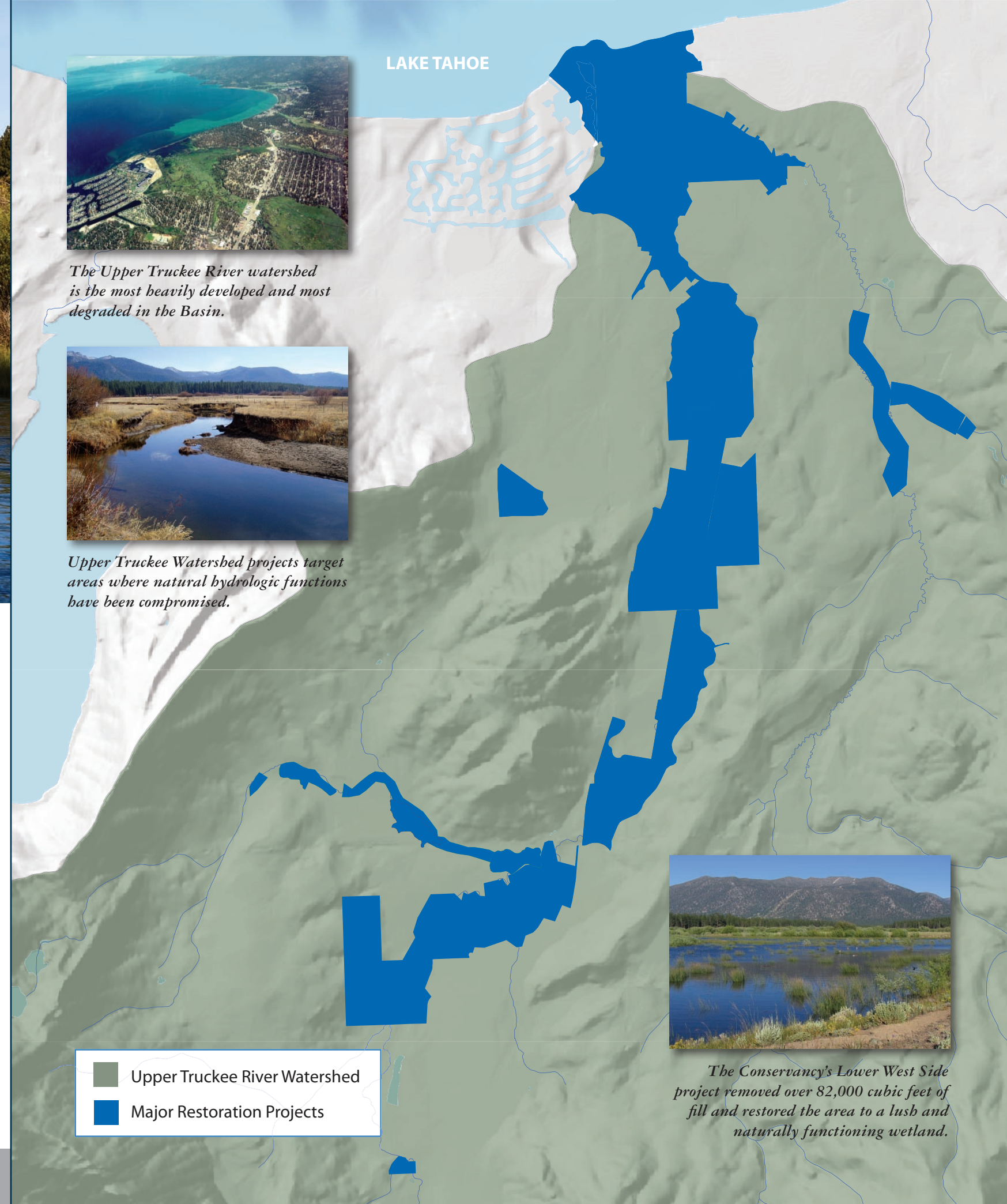
*The Upper Truckee River watershed is the most heavily developed and most degraded in the Basin.*



*Upper Truckee Watershed projects target areas where natural hydrologic functions have been compromised.*



*The Conservancy's Lower West Side project removed over 82,000 cubic feet of fill and restored the area to a lush and naturally functioning wetland.*







*“...the premier outdoor public and event place on Tahoe’s north shore.”*

## Commons Beach

TAHOE CITY’S “TOWN COMMONS” WAS ONCE HOME TO MARITIME COMMERCE AND RAIL LINES. When development and commerce shifted to the automobile, however, the town’s main connection to Lake Tahoe was lost.

In coordination with the Tahoe City Public Utility District and a wide range of community organizations, the Conservancy facilitated a design competition to reconnect the commons to the town—transforming Tahoe City’s public waterfront. The resulting project is now the premier outdoor public and event place on Tahoe’s north shore.



## Forest Health



*Unhealthy, overstocked forests are prone to catastrophic wildfire. Above: Following treatment, forests on Conservancy lands are restored to a more sustainable condition.*

HUMAN ACTIVITY HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED FOREST HABITATS IN THE TAHOE BASIN. During the 1800s, most old-growth stands were clear-cut to support Comstock mining. A century of fire suppression further disrupted natural ecological processes. As a result, the existing forest is less structurally diverse, supports fewer wildlife species, and is more prone to catastrophic fire. The Conservancy actively manages its forest-lands to restore a more diverse and sustainable condition.





*“The Conservancy facilitates trail projects that fill gaps in the existing system.”*

**Bicycle Trail Network**

REDUCING DEPENDENCE ON THE AUTOMOBILE IS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESSFUL REDEVELOPMENT of the Tahoe Basin. The Lake Tahoe Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan highlights the value of an alternative transportation network and identifies critical segments for development. By funding planning, right-of-way acquisition and trail construction, the Conservancy plays the lead role in ensuring this comprehensive multi-use trail network is implemented.

Working with local partners to bridge jurisdictional boundaries, the Conservancy facilitates trail projects that fill gaps in the existing system and benefit the broadest range of users. With each additional segment of the trail network, dependence on the automobile is reduced, bringing a corresponding reduction of greenhouse gases and promoting sustainability within the Tahoe Basin.







## Lakeview Commons at El Dorado Beach

IN THE HEART OF SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, LAKEVIEW COMMONS IS THE CENTERPIECE of the City’s Sustainability Plan, reconnecting its civic and public facilities with Lake Tahoe. A design competition and collaborative community process established a plan which includes a large lakefront beach and park, event spaces, transit hubs, picnic and camping areas, and other public and community facilities. When complete, Lakeview Commons will be a showcase for sustainable development of urban spaces in a spectacular setting.

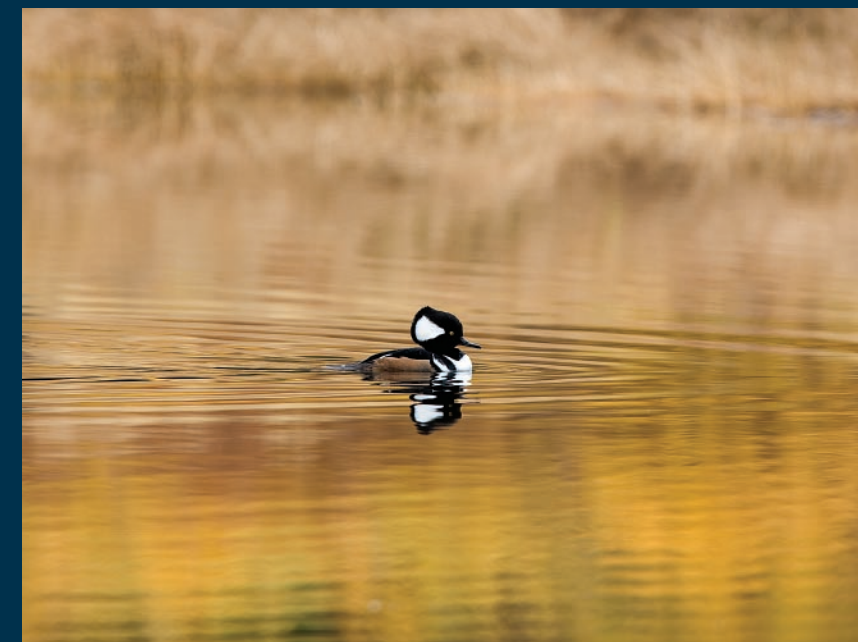


*“Wetlands and riparian areas are important for fish and wildlife foraging, reproduction, and escape cover.”*

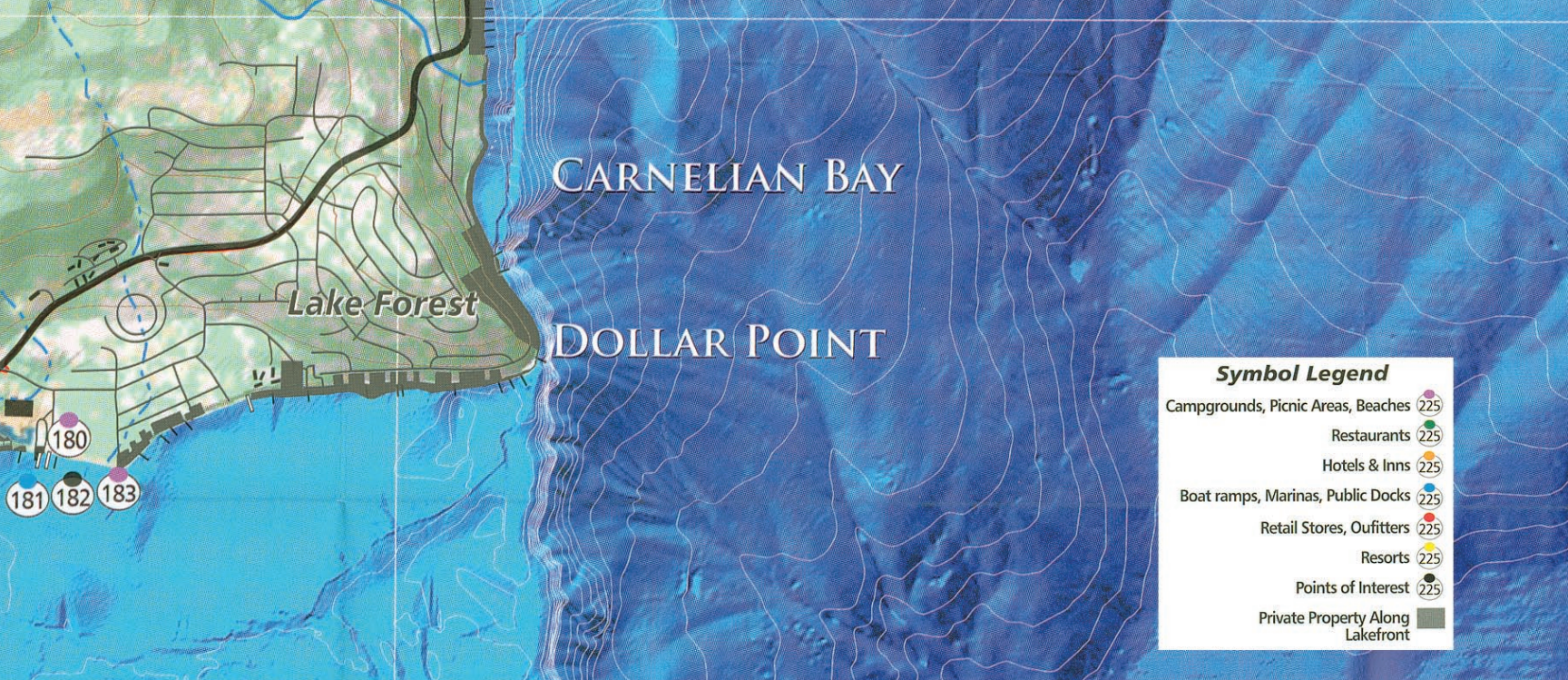
## Snow Creek

HISTORICALLY, SNOW CREEK MEANDERED THROUGH A WET MEADOW before reaching Lake Tahoe. In the 1960s, sections of the meadow were filled and degraded.

Wetlands and riparian areas are important for fish and wildlife foraging, reproduction, and escape cover—and these areas are recognized as the most critical habitats in need of preservation and restoration in the Tahoe Basin. Following removal of 25,000 cubic yards of fill and the reconstruction of wetlands, pond and stream channel, this project restored over 30 acres of significant wetland and critical wildlife habitat and improved fish migration in Snow Creek, providing habitat diversity for numerous wildlife species.







## Lake Tahoe Water Trail

LAKE TAHOE BOASTS 72 MILES OF SCENIC SHORELINE, SANDY BEACHES, AND ROCKY INLETS—paradise for kayakers and other non-motorized watercraft. Historically, however, a lack of facilities has limited lake access and basic information regarding the location of restrooms and launch sites has eluded even seasoned paddlers.

Water routes throughout the country are successful in addressing access issues. The Conservancy, in partnership with the Lake Tahoe Water Trail Committee and shoreline-oriented businesses, supports the Lake Tahoe Water Trail. A mapped route along the Lake, the Water Trail is a network of launch sites, picnic areas, restaurants, campgrounds, and overnight lodging facilities for recreational paddlers to enjoy year-round. A trail map and trip-planning guide are available at: [www.laketahoewatertrail.org](http://www.laketahoewatertrail.org).



## Van Sickle Bi-State Park

WHEN THE VAN SICKLE FAMILY DONATED 542 ACRES to the Nevada Division of State Parks (NDSP) in 1989, the NDSP and the California Department of Parks and Recreation envisioned acquiring the adjacent 156 acres on the California side to create a bi-state park. In 2001, this concept came to fruition when the Conservancy purchased the California property.

The park is located within a few minutes' walk from the Stateline casino core and will connect with the Conservancy's proposed South Tahoe Greenway, the Tahoe Rim Trail's Van Sickle Connector and Daggett Trail System, and the nearby Explore Tahoe Urban Trailhead.

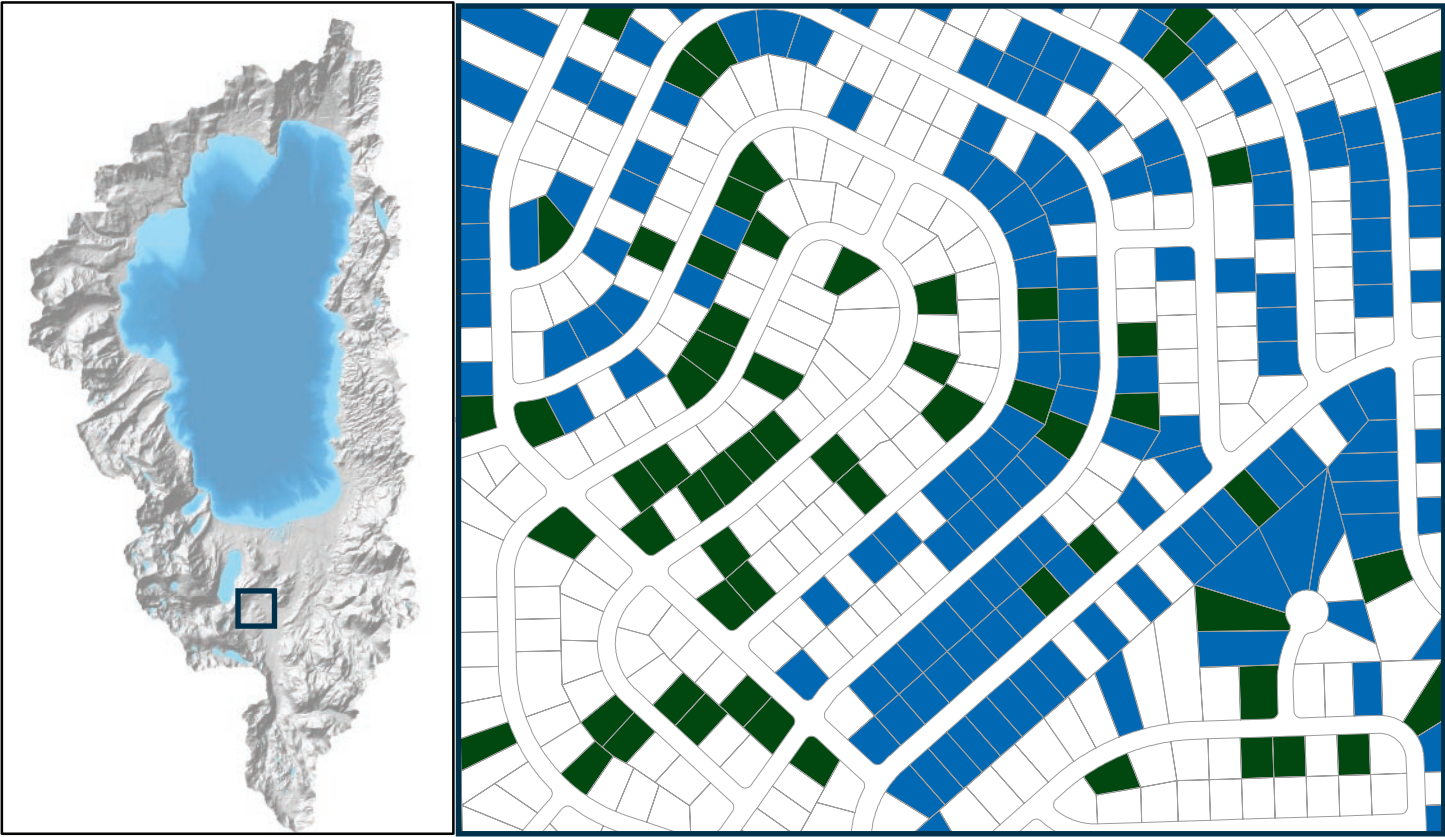




### Watersheds and Water Quality

URBANIZATION OF THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN OVER THE PAST 60 YEARS has significantly changed the characteristics of its watersheds. These changes contribute to the deterioration of the Lake’s famed water clarity, due in large part to the suspension of fine particles and algal growth.

Prior to development, precipitation infiltrated into the soil. Buildings and paved areas, however, generate large amounts of runoff, which transports sediments directly into the Lake. The Conservancy’s Watersheds and Water Quality program—in partnership with local governments—addresses these causes of declining clarity by infiltrating storm-water runoff, stabilizing drainage-ways, vegetating bare soils, and restoring natural hydrologic processes.



*Lands acquired by the Conservancy provide multiple community benefits including protection of natural resources, open space, aesthetic quality, and recreational opportunities.*

- U.S. Forest Service
- California Tahoe Conservancy

### Ownership

URBANIZATION ALSO RESULTED IN THE SUBDIVISION OF LARGE TRACTS into thousands of individually-owned parcels. When the Conservancy was established in 1984, about 15,000 undeveloped parcels remained on the California side of the Basin, with nearly half identified as environmentally sensitive.

Through a willing seller program, Conservancy acquisitions have brought more than 4,800 parcels into public ownership. Totaling over 6,400 acres, these lands provide multiple benefits to the community, including protection of natural resources, open space, aesthetic quality, and recreational opportunities.





*Conservancy lake access projects have brought over 1.75 miles of shoreline into public ownership, complementing other public lake access facilities. These efforts are particularly well illustrated along the Kings Beach lakefront.*

### Lake Access

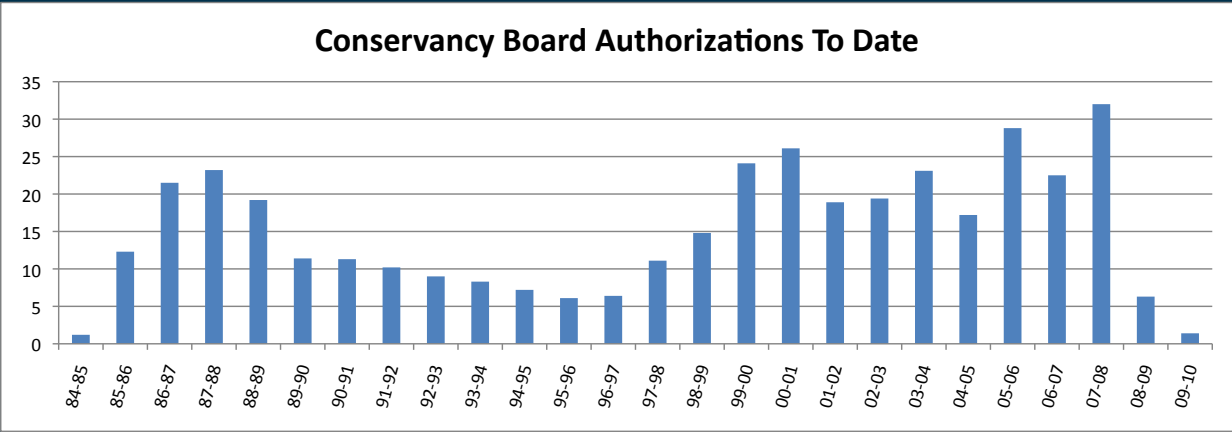
THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN IS A UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT that offers an abundance of recreation opportunities. Each year millions of visitors from around the world come to experience Lake Tahoe’s grandeur.

Despite the popularity of the Lake Tahoe region as a recreational destination, public access opportunities have historically been limited. The Conservancy’s Public Access and Recreation program was established to address the need for access opportunities. This program focuses on protecting and enhancing public access to the Basin’s celebrated natural resources with emphasis placed on lakefront areas that can accommodate significant visitor use.



# Support

*Funding to sustain the Conservancy comes from Statewide bond measures, the Lake Tahoe License Plate, program revenues, various Federal, State, and regional sources, and private donations. The Conservancy continually seeks partnerships and innovative approaches to support its programs and the projects.*



*To date, the Conservancy has authorized over \$450 million in support of its mission.*

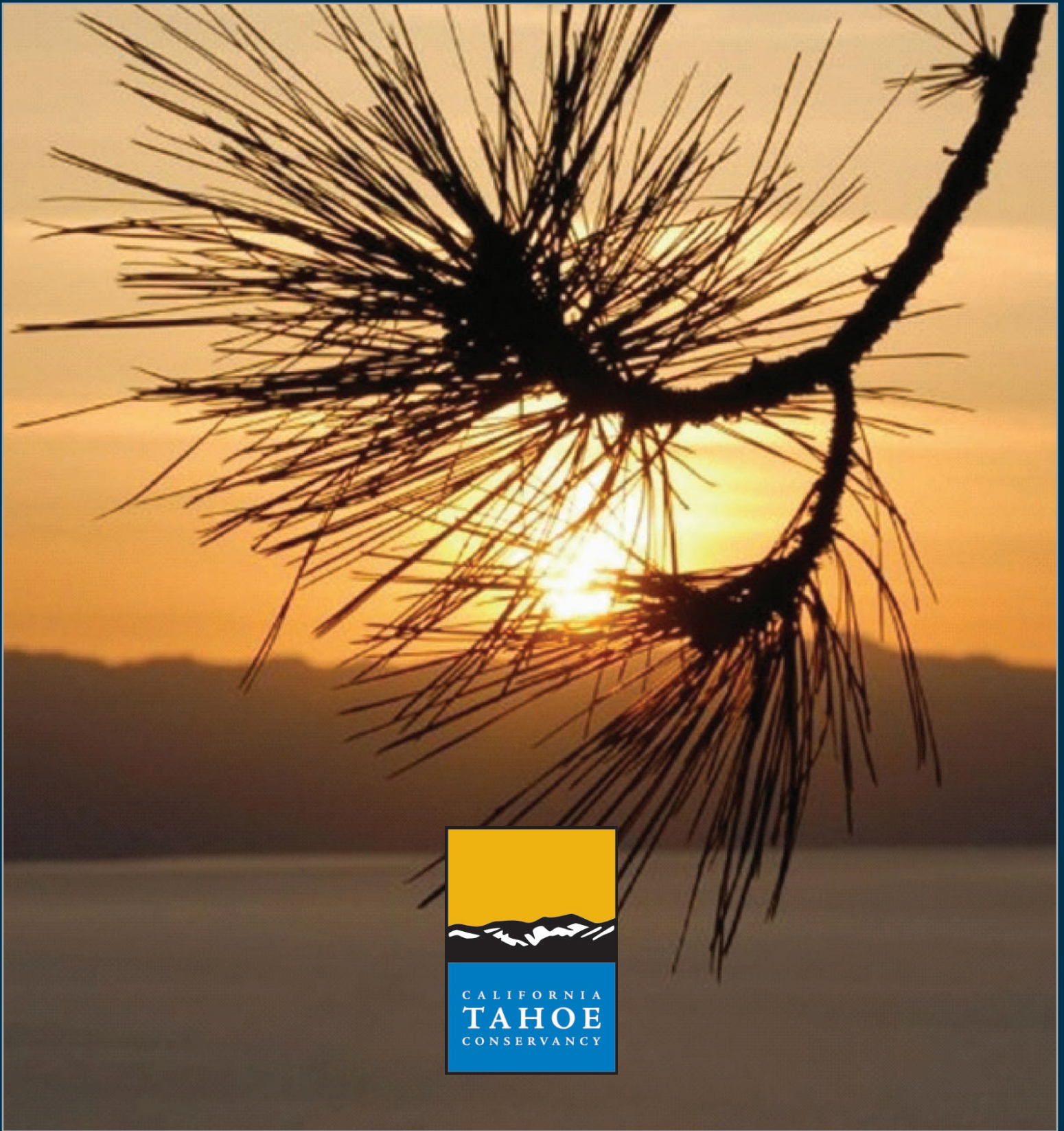
### Help Preserve Lake Tahoe’s Future



Californians who appreciate the beauty of Lake Tahoe can help protect its crystalline waters and provide public access through the purchase of a Lake Tahoe License Plate. Revenues from the sale of these plates help fund environmental and recreational projects throughout the California side of the Tahoe Basin.

*For more information and to purchase a Lake Tahoe License Plate, visit: [www.tahoefund.org](http://www.tahoefund.org)*





*Photo Credit: Nick Spannagel*

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